

Colombian COIN Conference Remarks

(as delivered)

Panel Entitled “Doctrine Evolution to Counter the Threat”

31 MARCH 2009

COL Daniel Roper

On behalf of LTG Bill Caldwell and the entire team at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the “Intellectual Center of the U.S. Army,” let me say what a privilege and honor it is to be here today. I’m humbled and flattered to address such a distinguished audience. This afternoon, I would like to briefly discuss three things with you: Combined Arms Center partnership with the Colombian Army; some U.S. Army doctrinal initiatives to deal with the challenges of insurgency & instability; and our views on a comprehensive approach.

The Combined Arms Center has a rich history of partnership with our Colombian colleagues. The first Colombian officer graduated from the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in 1973. We have a very special program at CGSC

where we induct graduates who have risen to the top of their Armies or their national leadership into our CGSC International Hall of Fame.

Twelve Colombians have been inducted in this prestigious program with graduates later becoming Ministers of Defense, Commanders of the Army, Ambassadors, and even a President. Just a few weeks ago, CAC Commander & I met with the two Colombian officers in the current course, and they shared their perspectives with us in preparation for this conference. These two officers will soon become the first Latin American officers ever enrolled in our elite School of Advanced Military Studies or SAMS. Having been Seminar Leader in SAMS several years ago, I can assure you that these two great officers will have an incredibly rich professional experience, and will no doubt teach as much as they learn.

Our Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), led by COL Felix Santiago, at Fort Benning, Georgia, also has a long-standing partnership with Colombia and our other Latin American friends and allies.

Since WHINSEC's inception in 2001, over 2170 personnel from Colombia have participated in our training programs. Colombia is one of the biggest supporters and benefactors of WHINSEC training, typically sending more students than any other country. There are currently 69 students and 26 guest instructors from Colombia at WHINSEC.

In another example of our cooperation, we recently commissioned the Combat Studies Institute (CSI) at Fort Leavenworth to write a case study on Colombian counterinsurgency operations and have conducted over 50 interviews and visited Colombia to get additional information. We look forward to this document's publication with great anticipation, and we'll make it available to our students and faculty upon completion.

I must also tell you that in my organization, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center we have a U.S. Special Forces officer who is Lancero qualified. He takes great pride in reminding us of this unique experience amongst the elite commandos of the Colombian Army.

As we consider the current and future strategic environment, we are certain that the Armies of the Western Hemisphere are in this together. We are

fighting wars that are “asymmetric” and “protracted” in nature. Transnational issues like extremism and narco-terrorism recognize no borders – they threaten the peace and security of the entire Western Hemisphere. Our victories will not be easy....and they will not be quick. As Admiral Stavridis reminded us earlier today, “Together we must think our way through this maze.”

We recognize and would like to congratulate our Colombian hosts on the development and adoption of an effective long-range strategy based on lessons learned and evolution of doctrine to counter the threat. This doctrine captures builds upon a rich COIN experience and continues to yield great operational successes.

Some doctrine writers may feel that their work is often not read and that it may not be appreciated. Today, nothing could be further from the truth. The collaboration, cooperation, and coordination that went into our recent doctrine is unprecedented. It has been said that FM 3-24 “Counterinsurgency” had a dozen primary authors, two dozen secondary authors, and 600,000 editors, because all of the Army and

Marine Corps got a chance to provide their suggestions.

FM 3-07, Stability Operations, was the most vetted U.S. Army manual ever published. Staffed across a broad body of practitioners, scholars, government agencies, and nongovernment organizations, the result is a community of practitioners who all got “buy-in,” and the relationships formed are enduring and may prove to be the most valuable part of the whole process.

What started as a product has become a process...and it is driving change. The result of this *collaboration, cooperation, and coordination* has been a recognition that this doctrine has a broader application than merely a single service. It has the ability to educate and inform our entire government. FM 3-24 led to a U.S. Government COIN manual, and it has been downloaded almost 1.8 million times on the Combined Arms Center website since November 2007. The Counterinsurgency manual has been reviewed on Salafi websites and even found in Taliban camps in Pakistan.

Our new doctrine represents a number of firsts. It is the first stability doctrine – service or joint – to answer the immediate needs of the force already actively engaged in ongoing operations. It is the first doctrine of any type to undergo a comprehensive multi-service, interagency, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental review. It is also the first time any service has attempted to capture and define a national approach to conflict transformation in doctrine and to do so with the broad support of the agencies, organizations, and institutions that share in that approach. It reflects the wisdom conveyed to us yesterday by GEN Padilla “That the military must be used hand-in-hand with social work.”

In the past, sometimes our institution had been either unable or reluctant to institutionalize the lessons learned from previous stability operations – this is no longer the case.

We recognize the ambiguity of the COIN fight, and the need for agile, adaptable leaders who are critical, creative thinkers. Rigid formulas and pre-defined enemy templates are largely irrelevant in

today's complex environment. We have adapted our curriculum in our schools, and are challenging previous assumptions. We are teaching officers that they must embrace a culture of engagement, and that a comprehensive approach is the only way to “win the peace.”

This comprehensive approach - the need to *collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate* applies not just to doctrine writers but to all in this room who are leaders and practitioners. Doctrine is no longer just a book collecting dust on the shelf -- it is dynamic, and it is causing quite a stir.

As the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, GEN George Casey stresses, “We must emphasize doctrine as the driver for change. You can’t cement change in the organization until you adapt the institutions. That change begins with doctrine.” We must think strategically, harmonizing policy, strategy, operations, and tactics – building upon the reforms and leadership inspired by GEN Ospina.

The leaders in this room face shared challenges. We can no longer look at violence, poverty, or corruption occurring inside one country’s border as isolated events. As Robert Taber stated in his

1965 book War of the Flea , “Tomorrow’s guerrilla armies, in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, will be drawn from the ranks of the world’s ‘have-nots,’ the hungry peasants and the urban slum dwellers who meet the first requirements of the guerrilla, having nothing to lose but their lives.”

The countries of the world are inextricably linked.Consider the economic meltdown we’ve seen recently – is there a country that hasn’t been affected? The world is interdependent, and thus, we must search for common solutions. There are many parallels between the challenges facing our Army in Afghanistan and Iraq and the challenges facing the Colombian Army and other Armies throughout the hemisphere.

In the United States today, we only have to look at what is happening along our southern border with Mexico to see how quickly narco-terrorism and violence can escalate and destabilize a country. What happens in one part of our hemisphere directly impacts us all. These new paradigms require new doctrine that recognizes the implications of what is occurring around the world....and no one understands that better than President Uribe and the Colombian leadership.

One thing that is striking about the wisdom of President Uribe's Democratic Security Strategy strategy against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is the multifaceted way he's addressed the problem. He hasn't defined it as strictly a military problem – killing and capturing more insurgents. He's defined it more broadly and has used development, job creation, restoring essential services, and leveraging strategic communications as tools to not only win the war but also the peace that follows.

These principles have broad application. It is critical to have a military with a destructive force, but the constructive piece is also critical.

We can kill insurgents all day long, and it won't bring any resolution to conflict. As Minister of Defense Santos conveyed to us earlier, "it is far better to capture than to kill." We can't kill all the bad guys....but maybe we don't have to – for example, recently over 30,000 former FARC fighters have resigned.....and the Colombian leadership has had the vision to implement a robust "re-entry" program for the former fighters. This speaks to the goal of "Social Recovery" described by GEN Padilla.

Fighters participate in training, counseling, and receive financial aid. In the words of one former FARC fighter, “It’s a beautiful opportunity for the education, the social aspects, and to be able to go forward with my life.”

As our CJCS Admiral Mullen stated when he was here in Colombia earlier this month, “Many of us from all over the world can learn from what has happened with respect to the very successful developments of Plan Colombia. As in all plans, there are parts of it that would be very applicable in other parts of the world and specifically to Afghanistan, and there would be other parts that would not apply.”

Our countries share many challenges, and we’ve learned similar lessons over the years, yet the future demands we not rest on our laurels and become complacent. As the Defense Minister told us, “we cannot lower our guard.” Our enemies in this complex world are constantly adapting to our successes ...and our doctrine must change too. While FM 3-24 drove changes that proved critical in stemming the tide of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, we know that focusing solely on

a narrow band of activities cannot begin to address the challenge of rebuilding a fragile state.

The aim of stability operations is not necessarily to reduce the military presence quickly but to achieve broader national policy goals that extend beyond the objectives of military operations. Stability operations are lengthy endeavors, and they must be approached with a focus toward long-term sustainment rather than short-term gains.

The U.S. Army elevated stability operations to coequal status with offensive and defensive operations, acknowledging that the effects attained through stability tasks are just as important, if not more so, to securing enduring peace and stability in areas torn by conflict. The lesson that forces “must address the civil situation directly and continuously” while simultaneously conducting combat operations against enemy forces – now forms the core of Army doctrine, the operational concept posited by FM 3-0, Operations.

FM 3-07, further expanded on principles from FM 3-0, and will be the driving force behind our ability to forge a comprehensive approach to stability operations. We began writing FM 3-07 with the ambitious aim of developing doctrine that not only provides the underpinnings needed to leverage the constructive capabilities of the force but also sets the foundation for unity of effort across all forces, agencies, and organizations involved. Our goal was to build trust and confidence among diverse actors with divergent perspectives to build a collaborative network of practitioners.

The U.S. Army realizes that we will never fight by ourselves again. We will have allies, various agencies from government, and nongovernment organizations alongside us in any future endeavor. Military forces perform stability operations to establish the conditions that enable this diverse group to succeed.

A comprehensive approach to warfighting which leverages all the instruments of national power as well as the expertise of our nongovernment and international partners is our best hope for peace

and security in the 21st century.....and these principles are applicable around the world. In light of this observation, I would like to commend your noteworthy efforts in a truly joint and integrated approach that we witnessed in Macarena yesterday.

History clearly demonstrates we cannot wish these reconstruction and development tasks away as mere civil. They are critical to the overall success of a campaign, and often our military capacity far exceeds our civilian capacity to respond initially, or the security situation is nonpermissive, and there is inevitably a period of transition that will require our expertise simultaneously while we fight a war.

So what we've done with this new doctrine is we've codified many of the lessons we've learned throughout history and more recently during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many of the lessons learned from our allies.

The incredible destructive capability of modern military forces must be complemented by an equally credible constructive capability, and the latter may ultimately be what brings more lasting peace.

Today I'd like to share with you an excerpt from a speech given by a Marine Major General during his change of responsibility ceremony last month in Iraq that tells you just how far we've come.

“It might surprise some here today of what a Marine is proudest of in the nearly three years he's spent on the ground in Iraq since March 2003. It is not the triumphs of the invasion and the rush to Baghdad, Tikrit and Bayji . . . or the two battles of Fallujah. . . . It's also not about the number of terrorists we've killed, and the network they served all but destroyed. . .

What I am very proud of is the number of human beings we did not have to kill because we never stopped extending the hand of friendship even in the darkest of days gone by, and the damage we didn't do because we resorted to force last, and always restrained its use when we did go to the guns.”

This Marine's comments speak to the ability to learn from the past, and adapt to the future, fully leveraging the ability to integrate hard and soft power. To do this, we need to grow more agile, adaptable leaders who are critical, creative thinkers.

How do you change the way leaders in an organization think? Not simply by writing doctrine but also with:

- **New scenarios at training centers**
- **New curriculum in military schools**
- **Better and accelerated lessons learned process**
- **Education**
- **And most importantly, leadership bold enough to do all of the above.**

Our Armies are learning and getting better every day. We owe this professional vigilance to our Nations, to our men and women in uniform, and to their families. Doctrine plays a critical role in this learning process, driving intellectual adaptation in our Armies. Our steadfast partnerships with Colombia and many of the other Nations represented here are critical to maintaining a secure and prosperous world – defeating extremist insurgents, and winning the peace that follows.

Conclusion:

A comprehensive approach to warfighting which leverages all the elements of national power as well as the expertise of our nongovernment and international partners is our best hope for peace and security in the 21st century. Our new doctrine reflects this reality, and will continue to drive change in our Army to enable it, in partnership with our close friends and allies, to continue to adapt and overcome the challenges of the future.